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ABSTRACT

During the school year 1969-1970 Quincy Public Schools in Massachusetts, a community of 90,000 adjacent to Boston, conducted an intensive investigation of all students leaving school for reasons other than transfer to another educational institution and death. Interviews with these students, their parents and an exhaustive analysis of school records constitute the sources of data. A control sample of non-leavers was randomly selected, matching only for grade and sex. Data was machine analyzed using univariate and multivariate techniques. It also includes a one year follow up of the school leavers focusing on their work adjustment, return to school adjustment, if any, and retrospective attitudes regarding their decision to leave school. Three recommendations resulted from the study: (1) expansion of vocational education options; (2) increase in instructional flexibility; and (3) guidance involvement with potential school leavers upon identification in elementary school. (Author/TA)

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DEPARTMENT OF PUPIL PERSONNEL SERVICES
QUINCY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
QUINCY, MASSACHUSETTS

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF SCHOOL LEAVERS IN THE QUINCY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM (1969 - 1970)

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Theodore J. Curley
January, 1971

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Chapter I

An Overview of the Research

In America today more than one million young people leave school prior to high school graduation (9). This means that in our secondary schools, one student out of every three will become a dropout. A survey of educational research and literature over the past two decades reveals a growing awareness of the extent of this problem, of its devastating impact on young people and of its insidious effect on society as a whole. In reviewing current research, it becomes clear that the factors leading to a premature departure from school are complex and multi-determined, involving not only the student, the school and the community, but the entire structure of our social system.

It is no wonder that James B. Conant dramatically refers to dropouts as "social dynamite" in our society. For they represent a growing minority of the hard-core unemployed. A casual glance at the want ads section of local newspapers reflects the lack of jobs available to youths without a high school diploma. In our highly technical and automated world there is no longer room for the untrained and unskilled laborer.

Critics of the current educational scene decry the lack of curriculum relevance in schools, yet they are quick to acknowledge that there are few, if any, alternative ways to gain access to the occupational marketplace other than the traditional twelve year school route. A diploma has become a necessary prerequisite to employability and as such it serves as a tangible "union card". A school leaver is deprived of this pass key.

Educators are loath to view the diploma as a "union card" rather than a mark of academic achievement and success. So are we. Yet we are sensitive to the demands and pressures of our changing society and are increasingly cognizant of the school's failure to provide a relevant and individualized educational experience for each student. A school leaver is a visible sign of this failure.

Peter Schrag, an outspoken critic of public education, attests that "part of the problem is that the school system is used essentially as a device for selection - selecting people in and selecting people out (2). We are committed to "selecting in" each of the 17,000 students in the Quincy Public School System - not in the role of a seat warmer adept at educational gamesmanship, but as an active learner who is encouraged to pursue a program that is geared to his individual needs.

It was this motivation that prompted an intensive study of all young people leaving the Quincy Public School System prior to graduation during the 1969-1970 school year. The research study was specifically designed to:

(1) determine the actual number of students actually leaving school prior to graduation (for reasons other than transfer to another educational institution or death):

(2) analyze the factors involved in the decision to leave school prematurely;

(3) compare this group with a randomized sample of non-leavers (controlled for grade and sex) to test for significant differences;

(4) follow up the school leavers for a one year period to assess their progress and retrospective attitudes toward school; and

(5) to make recommendations that will increase the holding power of the Quincy Public School System.

DESIGN AND METHOD OF THE STUDY

In the fall of 1969, administrative procedures were established so that each student who announced his intention to leave school at any time during the school year could be interviewed. The city-wide guidance staff was very supportive of this research effort and volunteered their services as interviewers. Whenever a student formally withdrew from school, the head guidance counselor or his designee would notify the study center and one of the twenty-five trained interviewers would arrive at the building within a thirty-minute period to formally administer the School Leaver Interview Schedule. A copy of this schedule is included in Appendix A.

In an effort to eliminate interviewer bias and to maximize objectivity, counselor-interviewers did not interview School Leavers from their own buildings. Therefore, interviewers had no prior contacts with the School Leaver. If, for example, a student withdrew from Quincy High School, an interviewer would be dispatched from North Quincy High School and vice versa.

Approximately two-thirds of the School Leavers were interviewed prior to formally checking out of school. The students who were not interviewed tended to be those dropped from the attendance register for reasons of chronic and sustained absence, and who therefore did not formally terminate from school.

Others were terminated by administrative action and were not processed through the study center.

Each interviewer was also responsible for administering the Parent Interview Schedule (which is included in Appendix B) to the parents of each School Leaver. Work schedules made it difficult and often times impossible to arrange a face-to-face interview with many parents. Accordingly, telephone interviews were frequently conducted.

Despite these efforts, less than 50% of the parents were interviewed or contacted. It was impossible to make contact with some parents, while others refused to answer questions or cooperate with the interviewer.

A third source of data was the cumulative school record on each School Leaver. These records include grades, academic progress, social and emotional observations, medical history, school activities, referrals to pupil personnel services staff and family data.

Selection of the Control Group

In research efforts such as this, it is important to determine if the experimental group, in this case, the School Leavers, differs in any significant way from students who remain in school. A control group was randomly selected in equal numbers from each of the schools involved. Grade and sex were those factors controlled. Age was deliberately omitted as a control in order to assess whether or not the experimental group was significantly older than the control group when grade was held constant.

The control sample was selected at the end of the school year as it was only at that point one could be sure they were not school leavers.

As it was not possible to interview each control student and his parents, comparisons between the two groups are based solely upon information contained in the cumulative records.

Analysis of Findings

A codebook was compiled incorporating 66 salient variables on the experimental or School Leaver group and 42 matching variables on the control or Non-Leaver group. The discrepancy between the numbers of variables coded on the two groups occurs because many of the variables that reflect reasons for leaving school are valid only for the experimental group.

The data was machine analyzed using univariate and multivariate techniques.

Follow-up of School Leavers

Follow-up contacts of all the School Leavers were initiated by the same pool of interviewers in December, 1970. This afforded a minimum of a six month assessment of progress since leaving school.

The interviews were conducted over the telephone and were based on a standard follow-up questionnaire. The questionnaire is included in Appendix C. When telephone contact was not possible, the questionnaire was mailed to the School Leaver and/or his parents. In instances where the School Leaver was in the service or otherwise unavailable, either parent was encouraged to fill out the questionnaire and was acceptable as the respondent.

Follow-up contact was made with 75% of the School Leavers and/or their parents. Thus it was possible to assess the aftermath of the school leaver experience.

Chapter II

Demographic Characteristics of School Leavers

RESEARCH SAMPLE

The data presented in this report are based on students leaving school during the 1969-1970 school year. It is not possible to determine how the numbers, percentages, and distribution of this group compares to previous years as accurate statistics are not available. Furthermore, there is no precedent for such a detailed analysis of school leavers in Quincy and therefore, the results obtained in this study will serve as a baseline for future research efforts.

In an effort to at least partially assess the reliability of the 1969-1970 School Leaver sample, a comparison was made between the numbers of School Leavers recorded in December 1970 and December 1971. The numbers as of mid-December of both years was 73 which would indicate that the 1969-1970 figures are fairly representative.

During the 1969-1970 school year, 198 School Leavers were recorded. Four of these students were excluded from the study as they were special class students and as such constituted a special subgroup by virtue of their intellectual handicap. Three others left due to illness or pregnancy, continued their education in a special tutoring program and reappeared on the school registers in September. These students were also eliminated from the study group. Hence, the final research sample included 191 School Leavers.

DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOOL LEAVERS ACCORDING TO GRADE

Table 1 presents the number of students who leave school in grades 9 through 12. Only 11 students or less than 1% of our School Leavers were 9th graders. Most students in grade 9 have not reached the statutory age of 16 which allows them to leave school. Yet even at this grade level there is a small though measurable degree of attrition.

Table 1

SYSTEM-WIDE SCHOOL LEAVERS - GRADE 9-12

Grade	Total Enrollment	School Leavers N	School Leavers %
9	1295	11	.8
10	1378	67	4.8
11	1228	71	5.7
12	1111	42	3.7
Totals	5012	191	3.8

The majority of School Leavers (72%) leave school in grades 10 and 11. Many students leave school in the 10th grade when they reach age 16, whereas some of them finish out the year but fail to return for grade 11.

The system-wide percentage of School Leavers in grades 9 through 12 is 3.8%. If this percentage is computed on the basis of School Leavers in grades 10 through 12, as reflected in Table 2, it increases to 4.8%.

Table 2

SYSTEM-WIDE SCHOOL LEAVERS - GRADES 10-12

Grade	Total Enrollment	School Leavers N	School Leavers %
10	1378	67	4.8
11	1228	71	5.7
12	1111	42	3.7
Totals	3717	180	4.8

DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOOL LEAVERS ACCORDING TO SEX

Table 3 reveals a significant difference between the numbers of boys and the numbers of girls leaving school. The city-wide percentage of boys leaving school is 4.7% as opposed to 2.8% of girls. Thus, boys constitute 65% of the School Leaver sample and outnumber girls approximately 2 to 1.

Table 3

SYSTEM-WIDE DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOOL LEAVERS ACCORDING TO SEX

Grade	Male Enrollment	Male Leavers N	Male Leavers %	Female Enrollment	Female Leavers N	Female Leavers %
9	674	10	1.5	621	1	0
10	702	41	5.8	676	26	3.8
11	640	42	6.6	588	29	4.9
12	583	31	5.3	528	11	2.0
Totals	2599	124	4.7	2413	67	2.8

These figures are fairly consistent with national trends and statistics which also indicate that the dropout rate is higher for boys (53%) than girls (47%) (3).

DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOOL LEAVERS ACCORDING TO SCHOOL

The distribution of School Leavers according to grade, sex, and school is presented in Table 4. The school system includes three high school settings - North Quincy High School (grades 9-12), Quincy High School (grades 10-12), and the Quincy Vocational-Technical School (grades 10-12), officially a part of Quincy High School but which serves students from both high schools. The percentage of attrition in the three high schools varies from 2.7% at North Quincy High to 4.5% at Quincy High to 11.4% at the Vocational-Technical School. The significantly higher incidence of School Leavers from the Vocational-Technical School will be more fully discussed.

There is also some interesting variation among the three high schools with respect to sex of the School Leaver. There are little differences between the numbers of male School Leavers at Quincy High (4.3%) and North Quincy High (3.8%). The Vocational-Technical School, however, has a significantly higher percentage of male School Leavers (10.9%). Indeed the actual number of male students leaving the Vocational-Technical School (57) is equal to the combined number of male students leaving Quincy High (28) and North Quincy High (29). A further examination of the male leavers at the Vocational-Technical School reveals an increase in School Leavers from grade 10 (8.3%) through grade 12 (12.8%) reflecting an overall loss of 10.9%.

Table 4

DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOOL LEAVERS ACCORDING TO HIGH SCHOOL

QUINCY HIGH SCHOOL

Grade	Male Enroll.	Male Leavers N	Male Leavers %	Female Enroll.	Female Leavers N	Female Leavers %	Total Enroll.	Total Leavers N	Total Leavers %
10	234	14	6.0	368	17	4.6	602	31	5.1
11	203	8	3.9	318	20	6.3	521	28	5.3
12	201	6	2.9	273	7	2.6	474	13	2.7
Totals	638	28	4.3	959	44	4.5	1597	72	4.5

NORTH QUINCY HIGH SCHOOL

Grade	Male Enroll.	Male Leavers N	Male Leavers %	Female Enroll.	Female Leavers N	Female Leavers %	Total Enroll.	Total Leavers N	Total Leavers %
10	252	9	3.6	287	6	2.0	539	15	2.7
11	268	14	5.0	257	5	1.9	525	19	3.6
12	234	6	3.6	244	2	.0	478	8	1.6
Totals	754	29	3.8	788	13	1.3	1542	42	2.7

VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL SCHOOL

Grade	Male Enroll.	Male Leavers N	Male Leavers %	Female Enroll.	Female Leavers N	Female Leavers %	Total Enroll.	Total Leavers N	Total Leavers %
10	216	18	8.3	21	3	14.3	237	21	8.9
11	169	20	11.8	13	4	30.7	182	24	13.1
12	148	19	12.8	11	2	18.2	159	21	13.2
Totals	533	57	10.9	45	9	21.1	578	66	11.4

There is a difference in the percentage of female students leaving Quincy High (4.5%) and North Quincy High (1.6%). It is not possible to speculate about the female School Leaver rate at the Vocational-Technical School as the numbers by comparison are so small. This is primarily due to the fact that during the 1969-1970 school year the Vocational-Technical School had only 2 program options for girls at the undergraduate level - Graphic Arts and Foods Preparation. New courses have been added during 1970-1971 school year and further expansion is being planned for next year.

The composite rate of loss for male high school students as shown in Table 4 is 5.9% while for females it is 3.6%

DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOOL LEAVERS ACCORDING TO AREA OF RESIDENCE

The analysis of the geographic distribution of the School Leaver sample only included those who had resided in Quincy for at least one year. Thus, tuition students and students who left school the same year they moved to the city were excluded. Frequently data on such cases was fragmentary and it was not felt that these students had sufficient time to develop a feeling of identity with the community.

Upon examination of the remainder of the sample, it was clear that the heavy clustering of School Leavers occurred in Census Tract 47 (Houghs Neck and Germantown), 48 (Quincy Point), and 49 (part of West Quincy). This should not be surprising for these areas have been deemed economically deprived. Currently a federally funded Title I project is in operation in elementary schools located in these areas in order to increase the scope of educational and preventive services available to children.

Table 5 indicates that while approximately 40% of the school population comes from these three areas, they account for 56% of those leaving school. The only other signficant area is Census Tract 40 (Montclair) which accounts for only 6% of the school population, but 11% of the School Leavers. These four areas account for 46% of the school population and 67% of its School Leavers. The remaining eight Census Tracts account for 53% of the school population and only 33% of its School Leavers.

Table 5

DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOOL LEAVERS ACCORDING TO AREA OF RESIDENCE

Census Tract	Student Population*		School Leavers	
	N	%	N	%
40	632	6.8	18	11.0
47	1861	20.0	44	28.0
48	954	10.0	21	14.0
49	908	10.0	22	14.0
Totals	4355	46.8	105	67.0

* Student population is based on numbers of students in elementary schools located in the specified Census Tract area during 1969-1970 school year. Total number of elementary school students is 9278.

Economic Implications

It is interesting to note that Census Tracts 47, 48, and 49 - areas that have the highest clustering of School Leavers and are the most economically deprived - all feed into Quincy High School. In spite of this, there are no significant differences between the numbers of male

School Leavers from Quincy High and North Quincy High. This is not the case with female School Leavers, however, for the school leaver rate for girls at Quincy High exceeds that of North Quincy High by 3%.

The male students from Census Tracts 47, 48, and 49 tend to enroll in the Vocational-Technical School in disproportionate numbers and it is this factor that explains the equitable holding power of male students at North Quincy High and Quincy High Schools. An analysis of male School Leavers from the Vocational-Technical School according to area of residence reveals that 27 or 63% came from Census Tracts 47, 48 and 49. Thus the Vocational-Technical School tends to attract a sizable number of economically deprived or "high risk" students which consequently contributes to their substantially higher school leaver percentage.

Non-Resident Students

Another noteworthy observation is the percentage of non-resident students included in the study sample. Almost 9% of the School Leaver sample are non-residents or students who leave school shortly after moving into the city. This factor not only increases the overall School Leaver rate but points to a subgroup that has an attrition rate that far exceeds that of the residential population.

It is important to point out that of the 18 Non-Resident Students, 14 or 78% were enrolled in the Vocational-Technical School. This factor tends to increase the numbers of high-risk potential leavers.

Thus the combination of large numbers of students coming from the lower socio-economic background as well as a significantly higher non-resident population tended to greatly inflate the Vocational-Technical School attrition rate.

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS

The city of Quincy has a natural boundary known as Furnace Brook which separates the north end of the city from the south end. All students residing in Census Tract areas 38 through 43 in the north end of the city attend North Quincy High School while all students residing in Census Tract areas 44 through 49 in the south end of the city attend Quincy High School. Students from both schools may elect a Vocational-Technical education. Seventy-five percent of the 533 students enrolled in the Vocational-Technical School reside in the south end of the city or the Quincy High district whereas only 25% reside in the north end of the city or the North Quincy High district. This disproportionate enrollment percentage can be explained by two factors.

In the first place, the Vocational-Technical School is a part of Quincy High School and indeed physically adjoins it. It would follow that the school would be more easily accessible to students in the south end of the city and that they would tend to have a greater sense of identity with it. Moreover, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to choose a Vocational-Technical option and, as previously seen, more economically-deprived students reside in the south end of the city or in the Quincy High district.

The Work Study Program which has been included in the educational offerings of both Quincy High and North Quincy High Schools for the past 7 years is another vocational option available to high risk students. This program involves a half day of academic study and a half day of supervised, paid employment. There is no such program at the Vocational-Technical School.

During the 1969-1970 school year, 90 students were enrolled in the Work Study Program. The waiting list varies from 50 to 100 students and many interested students do not even bother to apply as they realize their chances of admission are slight. This program has not been expanded to accommodate the numbers of students perpetually on the waiting list.

Table 6 presents the geographic distribution of the students enrolled in the Work Study Program. Fifty-six or 62% come from the north end of the city as opposed to 34 or 38% from the south end. Moreover, of the 44 males enrolled in the program, 33 or 75% are from the north end of the city in contrast to 11 or 25% from the south end of the city.

Table 6

DISTRIBUTION OF WORK STUDY STUDENTS ACCORDING TO HIGH SCHOOL

Work-Study Students	Quincy High		North Quincy High	
	N	%	N	%
Males	11	32.4	33	58.9
Females	23	67.6	23	41.1
Totals	34	100.0	56	100.0

When viewed in terms of geographic distribution, the Vocational-Technical School tends to enroll a disproportionate number of students from the south end of the city; conversely, the Work Study Program tends to enroll a disproportionate number of students from the north end of the city.

Chapter III

Reasons for Leaving

It is difficult to identify, categorize and really understand the many factors that cause a young person to leave school prior to graduation. This is a complex, multi-determined decision - one that may have its roots in parental attitudes toward education, personal problems that interfere with adequate school performance, or a school experience fraught with failure and frustration. More often than not, it is an admixture of all three.

Leaving school is often an emotionally charged act. It may be triggered by anger toward a system or administrator perceived to be unfair or uncaring, indifference toward a school program that is not relevant for the consumer, doubts and fears about one's ability to achieve and compete, or a compulsion to run under pressure of academic failure or administrative wrath. Regardless of the underlying reason, when a young person terminates his education prematurely, everyone loses: the student, the school system and society.

In viewing the offical school records of School Leavers, six general reasons for leaving school can be identified. Table 7 specifies the six categories and presents the actual number of cases included in each group. It is interesting to note that roughly 80% of the School Leavers sample or those included in the first three categories ostensibly made their own decision to leave school.

Table 7

REASONS FOR WITHDRAWAL FROM SCHOOL

Official Category	School Leavers N	School Leavers %
(1) Own Decision	61	35.9
(2) Await Legal Age (16)	47	28.0
(3) Chronic Absence	26	15.4
(4) Crisis	20	11.2
(5) Administrative Action	10	6.0
(6) Parental Request	6	3.5
Total	170	100.0

Each of the categories will be briefly discussed and illustrative case studies cited.

OWN DECISION TO LEAVE

Approximately 36% of the School Leavers left school in order "to go to work". While these students formally left of their own volition, they tended to be in academic or administrative difficulty or unable to enroll in the school program of their choice.

The School Leavers tend to come from lower socio-economic circumstances, as will be discussed in the following chapter, and hence, the Work-Study program which provides an opportunity to earn money has a great appeal. In fully 40% of the School Leaver sample, the inability to enroll in the Work Study program due to its limited enrollment precipitated the student's decision to leave school.

In one interview a mother spoke of her "bitter disappointment" in her son's leaving school for "now John will be behind the eightball just like his father has always been." John, the oldest of six children and a marginal student at best, purchased a car and struggled to maintain it by working part-time. When he was denied admission to the Work Study program, he resolved his struggle by leaving school in favor of a full-time job.

The following case study of Sally clearly presents some of the factors involved in the final decision to leave school.

Case Study: Sally

Sally sells shoes at the South Shore Plaza and welcomes her weekly pay check. Now that she is treated as a boarder at home she finds that the cost of living is "outrageous"! Her Dad is a machinist and works hard, too. Supporting a household of seven people isn't easy these days.

As a tenth grader, Sally realized that school, as she had always known it, was not getting her anywhere fast. Of course she was a bit older than the other kids: she had been kept back in first grade. She often wondered why the teacher picked her to repeat. She always liked school and teachers. She paid attention and tried to do her classwork. There were times when she missed a lot because she had to stay home to take care of the kids but this she couldn't help. Her Dad encouraged her to work hard in school and take advantage of all the opportunities that he had missed out on when he had left school in grade eight.

It wasn't that she wasn't learning anything in her business education courses. Sally was discouraged trying to keep up in Biology and World Cultures: she failed them. Her brother's friend had a special deal at high school. He was on a work-study program where he went to classes in the morning and to a job in the afternoon. Why couldn't she do that?

Sally talked with her counselor but wasn't given too much hope. The fact was that lots of kids had the same idea. There were more kids than the program could handle with the existing staff. She felt encouraged, however, when she was told that she could file an application for the program. With the help of her parents, she got the form filled out and anxiously awaited an acceptance.

The summer dragged. It wasn't very exciting being chief baby-sitter, errand girl, etc. Sally seemed to have little time for herself but she knew things would be different when September came. The work-study program would save her from repeating another grade and she'd get a chance to work.

Yes, she's working but that's all! When she contacted the school she learned that her name was on the waiting list along with fifty others. A work-study program had NOT been planned for her. The high school said that they'd be happy to help her plan another program instead.

More discouraged than angry, she shared the news at home. Her Dad and Mom talked it over with Sally and made a bargain with her. If she could get a job, they would accept the idea of her leaving school but she'd have to then become a paying boarder in their home. A job she found and board she pays.

THE 16 YEAR OLD LEAVER

This category represents a special subgrouping set apart because they appeared to simply await their sixteenth birthday so they could leave school. Twenty-eight percent of our School Leavers fall into this category. The case study which follows is representative of this group.

Case Study: Carl

Happy Birthday! Carl celebrated his sixteenth birthday by leaving school. He had looked forward to the December date all summer and fall. He'd "had it"!

The oldest of five children, Carl lived in a house without a mother: she had died. His father, a welder by trade, had said his piece and had left the decision up to the boy. Why fight it?

Elementary and junior high school hadn't been too bad. Teachers constantly told him that his California Test of Mental Maturity scores showed that he had good academic ability; scores that could mean college. Carl somehow didn't recognize this. He managed to get by each year in spite of many absences. He never thought of school as being too exciting. It was better staying at home. Getting to school on time was not an outstanding feat of his: tardy forty-one times in grade eight. Like many eighth graders, Carl's conduct and effort rated some unsatisfactory marks.

Grade nine was a pretty good year for Carl, if you discount the forty-three days of absence. His scores on the DAT were revealing: Abstract Reasoning - 99th percentile; Space Relations - 85th percentile; Verbal Reasoning - 60th percentile, etc. He had an opportunity to work in the cafeteria and got some first hand experience from a fine woman manager. The Chefs' Club, made up of ninth grade boys, intrigued him. This was great! These two exposures to the area of foods, lead him to make the choice of a Vocational-Technical high school program in this field. Carl applied, was accepted, and got satisfactory marks for the first two quarters. Then something happened. He failed miserably in the fourth quarter in his vocational subjects, passing only English, practical math, and physical education for the year. Guidance services were made available to Carl, including a school psychologist.

Facing failure for the year, the fifteen year old boy decided to enroll in high school. His program was made up of 11th grade English and practical math, repeating U. S. history, basic chemistry and industrial arts. This program did not seem to indicate any clearly defined vocational goal. At the end of the first marking period his report card showed two failures and three incompletes. Why worry? His sixteenth birthday would be his salvation!

Now, one birthday later, Carl is still out of school, unemployed, and saying that if he had it to do all over again he'd make the same decision.

Happy Birthday!

THE CHRONIC ABSENTEE

The chronic absentee who represents the third largest group leaves school by default. These students are dropped from the active rolls as a result of sustained and unexplained absences. Sometimes when students felt they were going to fail academically they merely stopped attending rather than to go through the process of formal withdrawal.

CRISES

Included in this fourth category are those students who left school abruptly as a result of a crisis situation in their lives. These crises include pregnancy, involvement with drugs, serious illness, including emotional breakdown or, in one instance, incarceration in an adult institution.

The following case study is illustrative of this category. Although Alice's life was indeed crisis-oriented, it was her increased involvement with drugs that precipitated her withdrawal from school.

Case Study: Alice

Alice is an able, bright, capable fifteen year old girl who has been a low achiever since entering the ninth grade. A pretty, attractive brunette, she dresses in a hippie, sloppy, raggedy fashion. She talks and moves slowly and has pasty white skin which might reflect her frequent use of amphetamines and barbiturates. Though not an addict, she admits to having used heroin. She comes from a multi-problem family - her mother has been married twice and has been living with another man who recently left. She has five younger siblings, two boys and three girls, and one sister older by a year. Her brother Robert is currently in court on a breaking and entering charge and the judge has ordered the Children's Protective Service to make an investigation. People are always going in and out of the house and it is alleged to be a house of prostitution. The home is ramshackle and completely uncared for.

A loner, Alice has been talking to her guidance counselor for over a year. Her friends are outside of school and in Boston. She roams the Commons area and is heavily invested in the drug culture. Her boyfriend is seven years older, is a heroin addict, and is presently serving a short prison sentence. While academically capable she was never in school long enough to sustain any real effort. Up until the middle of the tenth grade, the year she dropped out, she had been absent 46 times and tardy 12. This year her older sister left school. At this point Alice indicated her desire to leave school and come back again next year.

There have been several contacts with her mother. The mother relates to Alice like a girl friend - she never takes a stand and she feels that "It is their life". Mother is too caught up with her own problems to be able to relate effectively to and handle her children.

The school had made every effort to keep Alice in school. In an effort to sustain her in school the following recommendations were made by the Review Board: by modifying her school program, assisting her to find part time work and agreeing to lend her money to purchase clothing.

All the efforts of the school and guidance counselor, however, could not reverse her decision to leave school. Hopelessly behind in her school work, in constant trouble with the Dean of Women, and increasingly involved in the drug scene, Alice suddenly disappeared from the community. She recently left home for places unknown and sent her guidance counselor a Christmas card without a return address.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

When all available resources within a building have been exhausted and a student continues to encounter severe problems or persists in flagrant violation of school rules and regulations, two courses of action are open. The student may be referred to the City-Wide Board of Review which is chaired by the Director of Pupil Personnel Services and includes the Head Nurse, the Coordinator of Elementary Guidance, a member of the Headquarters Guidance Staff, a clinical psychologist and the Senior Supervisor of Attendance. Participants also include the administrative and pupil personnel services staff from the student's school and oftentimes the student and his or her parents. Every effort is made to work out a therapeutic solution that is based upon the unique needs of the student.

During the 1969-1970 school year, 23 cases were conferenced by the Review Board. Four students chose to withdraw from school rather than to follow through with the Review Board recommendations. Six students were referred on to the Suspension Board.

The Suspension Board, also chaired by the Director of Pupil Personnel Services, meets to discuss cases where expulsion is recommended. Participants on this Board include various administrative and pupil personnel services staff members as well as the student and his or her parents. After careful deliberation the Suspension Board may recommend that a student be expelled for the remainder of the year or permanently. The recommendations are then submitted to the Superintendent and the School Committee for their action. During the 1969-1970 school year, 4 students were recommended for expulsion.

Hence, 10 students left school by the official administrative route.

PARENTAL CONSENT

The smallest category were those students who left at the request of their parents. Usually such action is taken when the student is in difficulty and the parent feels that it would be more sensible for him to leave and return the following year in order to make a fresh start. There was one notable exception, however, on the part of the parent who became upset with his son's poor effort and demanded that he withdraw and go to work.

TELLING IT LIKE IT IS: INTERVIEWS WITH SCHOOL LEAVERS AND THEIR PARENTS

After interviewing many School Leavers and their parents, one begins to question the validity of the statistics presented in Table 7 which indicate that 80% of the School Leavers withdraw "on their own". In numerous instances, School Leavers and their parents clearly indicate that they were presented with the option of "orderly withdrawal or suspension."

Such dictums were usually presented verbally and consequently never became part of the official record. Furthermore, students were told that if they elected to withdraw, they could return to school the next year but not so if they were suspended. Such a decision is difficult for both the student and his parents; the School Leavers, however, simply withdrew. The exact numbers that depart under these circumstances are not known.

Many parents discussed their futile efforts to have their child's program altered and indicated that when this was not possible it led to a marked disinterest in school. Enrollment possibilities in the Work-Study program and the vocational options at the Vocational-Technical School are limited. When, for example, students are unable to enter the program they selected in the Vocational-Technical School, they are often enrolled in a program that is their second or third choice. When dissatisfaction with the program mounts and there are no other alternatives, the student is apt to leave school. Students also perceive inequities within a given program. A Vocational-Technical School Leaver interviewed early in his senior year stated "I came here to learn something about cooking and I'm tired of just washing pots and pans."

Despite a system-wide thrust to create an individualized and flexible curriculum, secondary students continue to get "locked into" a program fairly early in the school year. The curriculum is still too inflexible to make revisions or changes possible beyond a certain point. This points up the tragedy of establishing the school year on an annual basis rather than a semester basis.

There is then considerable discrepancy between official reasons as to why a student left as opposed to their own perceptions. Certainly the perceptions of students and parents are subjective, yet their frustrations with the system and its seeming inflexibility are real and lend added impetus to system-wide efforts for change.

Chapter IV

Etiological Characteristics of the School Leaver

To merely categorize the reasons a student leaves school is not sufficient in a school system committed to meeting the individual needs of each student. We must continue to ask why and to struggle to unravel the personal and educational histories of the school leaver seeking clues or early warning signals.

In an effort to identify those variables that increase the likelihood of a student leaving school prematurely, the early school careers of the School Leavers as reflected in cumulative records were compared with a randomized control group of Non-School Leavers. The five salient variables that differentiate the two groups will be presented and discussed in this chapter.

FAMILY SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

Although the city of Quincy and its school system includes all socio-economic levels, it is primarily the lower class children who leave school early. This is clearly seen in Table 8 which presents the socio-economic class of the School Leavers and Non-Leavers according to the Hollingshead "Two Factor Index of Social Position." (6) The socio-economic class is determined by the father's education and occupation and the class structure is as follows: I - upper class; II - upper middle; III - middle class; IV - lower middle class; and V - lower class.

Table 8

SOCIAL CLASS*

Social Class	Experimental N	Experimental %	Control N	Control %	Total N	Total %
I	2	1.1	3	1.8	5	1.5
II	2	1.1	28	16.7	30	8.7
III	42	23.8	111	66.5	153	44.5
IV	93	52.6	25	15.0	118	34.3
V	28	15.8			28	8.1
NA	10	5.6			10	2.9
Totals	177	100.0	167	100.0	344	100.0

* $x^2 = 130.85$ 5 d.f. $p < .000$

The differences between the two groups are highly significant. For example, over 80% of the Non-Leavers fall within the top three classes whereas only 27% of the School Leavers fall within these groupings. Also, twenty-eight families of School Leavers fell into Class V, the lowest socio-economic group, while none of the Non-Leaver group was included in this category.

Low socio-economic status has long been associated with the school dropout (4, 10) and this is certainly true with respect to the School Leavers in Quincy as well. Thus, socio-economic status is a highly significant variable in differentiating between the two groups. The lower the socio-economic class, the greater the likelihood that a student will not complete school.

RATE OF ABSENTEEISM

Differences in the rate of absenteeism between the School Leavers and the Non-Leaver group did not begin to appear until grade 6. At the sixth grade level there was a statistically increased rate of absenteeism for the School Leaver group. Tables 9, 10, and 11 show sharp statistical differences and clearly reflect the progressive deterioration of the School Leavers' attendance in grades 8 and 10.

Table 9

RATE OF ABSENTEEISM IN GRADE 6*

Days Absent	Experimental		Control	
	N	%	N	%
0-10	53	54.7	64	71.2
11-15	13	13.4	12	13.3
16-20	12	12.4	9	10.0
Over 20	19	19.5	5	5.5
Totals	97	100.0	90	100.0

* $X^2 = 9.44$ d.f. = 3 $p = < .05$

Table 10

RATE OF ABSENTEEISM IN GRADE 8*

Days Absent	Experimental		Control	
	N	%	N	%
0-10	54	39.5	77	54.7
11-15	19	13.9	39	16.3
16-20	19	13.9	16	11.3
Over 20	45	32.8	25	17.7
Totals	137	100.0	141	100.0

* $X^2 = 24.74$ d.f. = 3 $p = < .001$

Table 11

RATE OF ABSENTEEISM IN GRADE 10*

Days Absent	Experimental N	Experimental %	Control N	Control %
0-10	16	11.9	74	44.9
11-15	11	8.2	24	14.5
16-20	17	12.7	15	9.1
Over 20	90	67.2	52	31.5
Totals	134	100.0	165	100.0

* $X^2 = 41.09$ d.f. = 3 $p = < .001$

A qualitative analysis of the attendance pattern of School Leavers showed frequent but sporadic absences. In some cases, the number of absences ran as high as seventy days in a single year.

Rate of absenteeism is a highly significant variable in differentiating between School Leavers and Non-Leavers. Absences in excess of twenty days per year at or beyond grade 6 increases the likelihood that the student will become a School Leaver.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Unlike the Non-Leaver group, the School Leavers began experiencing academic difficulty and failure early in their elementary school careers. Elementary school records were examined in order to assess performance in both reading and mathematics. The grades received in these two subjects were averaged and each student was then assigned to one of the following four categories: Fail, Basic, Above Average or Superior.

Tables 12 and 13 indicate a highly significant difference between the two groups in performance in both reading and math. In both areas, 90% of the School Leavers clustered in the basic to fail categories as opposed to only 65% of the Non-Leavers. There is considerable overlapping in the middle categories, however.

Lowered performance in either/or reading and mathematics tends to increase the likelihood that a student will leave school.

Table 12

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL READING PERFORMANCE*

Performance	Experimental N	Experimental %	Control N	Control %
Fail	20	20.2	4	4.4
Basic	69	69.7	56	61.5
Above Average	9	9.1	24	26.4
Superior	1	1.0	7	7.7
Total	99	100.0	91	100.0

* $X^2 = 23.04$ d.f. = 3 $p = \leq .000$

Table 13

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL MATH PERFORMANCE*

Performance	Experimental N	Experimental %	Control N	Control %
Fail	21	21.2	10	11.0
Basic	70	70.7	49	53.8
Above Average	4	4.0	24	26.4
Superior	4	4.0	8	8.8
Total	99	100.0	91	100.0

* $X^2 = 22.93$ d.f. = 3 $p = < .0001$

GRADE RETENTION

A number of studies (8) have specifically noted that early school failure and retention set the stage for the premature leaving of school. A recent study (7) has corroborated these findings and stated that being "over large" for a grade (as the result of non-promotion) was highly related to students leaving school.

> Since status of being overlarge in the 6th grade is largely attributed to retention (non-promotion), the strong relationship of age to both dropout and grade of dropout was interpreted as supporting evidence for the negative effects of retention in elementary school. The finding that this variable was maintained when effects of other variables were controlled, i.e., measures of achievement, absence, and characteristics of family, suggests that retention in elementary school has negative effects on educational attainment that are not attributable to lack of achievement, low ability, or social background.

The School Leavers had significantly more non-promotions than the Non-Leavers. Table 14 indicates that 99 or almost 60% of the School Leavers had been retained in grade one or more times as opposed to 18 or 11% of the Non-Leavers. Seventeen or almost 10% of the School Leavers were retained more than once, whereas only four or 2.5% of the Non-Leavers were. This means that School Leavers tended to be retained in grade at least five times as often as Non-Leavers.

It is surprising to note the numbers of School Leavers that were not promoted in secondary school. In junior high school when a youngster is retained, he must repeat an entire year - including the subjects he passed - as is the case in elementary school. A high school student was considered retained when he did not earn a sufficient number of points to move on to the next grade with his class. A student is often able to "make up" these points the following year by adding another subject to his program of studies. Thus, a retention in high school does not necessarily mean repeating an entire year. Thirty-three students or almost 20% of the School Leavers were not promoted in secondary school as opposed to only five or slightly more than 3% of the Non-Leavers.

Moreover, it would appear that the School Leavers have received significantly more "social promotions" or "assignments" (i.e., the student was moved on to the next grade without "earning" promotion) than the Non-Leaver group. It was not possible to confirm this hypothesis, however, as record keeping throughout the system is fragmentary and inconsistent; often times this can only be inferred from the written comments of a teacher.

Table 14

GRADE RETENTION*

Grade Retained	School Leavers N	School Leavers %	Non-Leavers N	Non-Leavers %
Never	71	41.8	135	88.1
K-1	28	16.5	5	3.3
2-3	20	11.8	5	3.3
4-6	18	10.6	3	2.0
7-9	11	6.5	2	1.3
10-12	22	12.9	3	2.0
Totals	170	100.0	153	100.0

* $X^2 = 75.81$ d.f. = 6 $p = < .000$

In view of the research in this area as well as an analysis of our own School Leavers, it is difficult, if not impossible, to defend an educational policy that sanctions non-promotion as a means of handling non-achieving children. Other alternatives must be sought (5) for lowered academic performance and subsequent non-promotion significantly increases the likelihood of a student not completing his high school education.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER OBSERVATIONS

At the completion of each elementary school grade, a teacher records a brief description of each student's academic and social progress onto the cumulative record. This is in addition to the student's grades and test scores. A review of these teacher comments lends valuable insights into the early school experiences of a child. As a measure of assessment, however, it is necessary to underscore its subjectivity and indicate that it is most reliable at the two extremes. That is, "good students" appear to have consistently good comments written about them whereas the recalcitrant behavior problems who lack academic motivation receive consistently negative evaluations. The language used in the records tends to be stronger when commenting about those who have been difficult to manage in class (i.e., "Peter is always wanting attention ... becoming disrespectful and obnoxious when it is not forthcoming." "John is a wear on the nerves."). One cannot help but ponder the interplay of the "self-fulfilling prophesy" which states simply that our students become what we expect them to be, whether our expectations are left implicit or made explicit or are communicated in the form of grades or written descriptions.

Unfortunately, we do not have complete cumulative records of our School Leaver and Non-Leaver groups. Many students moved into the system without background records and in other cases records have been lost or misplaced over the years.

In an effort to examine teacher observations, the available written descriptions on each child at the first, fourth and sixth grade levels were rated as being either negative, positive, negative and positive, or neutral. Tables 15-17 present the findings. The teacher comments regarding the School Leaver and Non-Leaver groups are not statistically significant in Grade 1. While the School Leaver group tends to be seen in a more negative light in Grade 4, these differences are not statistically significant. In Grade 6, however, more students who ultimately become School Leavers are described negatively by teachers and in this regard they do differ significantly from the Non-Leaver group.

Thus, teacher descriptions of the School Leaver group become more negative throughout their elementary careers and indeed in Grade 6 differ significantly from the descriptions of students who remain in school. Hence, negative descriptions by teachers throughout elementary school and continuing in Grade 6 tends to increase the likelihood of a student becoming a School Leaver.

It would be interesting to see if this trend continued into the secondary level, but teacher observations are not recorded beyond Grade 6.

Table 15

TEACHER DESCRIPTIONS IN GRADE 1*

Teacher Descriptions	School Leavers		Non-Leavers	
	N	%	N	%
Negative	12	17.6	10	11.8
Mixed	33	48.4	35	42.2
Positive	18	26.5	28	33.0
Neutral	5	7.5	11	13.0
Totals	68	100.0	84	100.0

* Differences are not significant by Chi Square Analysis.

Table 16

TEACHER DESCRIPTIONS IN GRADE 4*

Teacher Descriptions	School Leavers N	School Leavers %	Non-Leavers N	Non-Leavers %
Negative	19	23.2	11	12.7
Mixed	39	47.5	48	55.3
Positive	21	25.6	21	25.1
Neutral	3	3.7	6	6.9
Totals	82	100.0	86	100.0

* Differences are not significant by Chi Square Analysis.

Table 17

TEACHER DESCRIPTIONS IN GRADE 6*

Teacher Descriptions	School Leavers N	School Leavers %	Non-Leavers N	Non-Leavers %
Negative	30	31.8	12	13.3
Mixed	33	36.1	44	48.3
Positive	26	27.5	33	36.2
Neutral	5	4.6	2	2.2
Totals	94	100.0	91	100.0

* $X^2 = 10.66$ d.f. = 3 $p = < .02$

PROFILE OF THE POTENTIAL SCHOOL LEAVER

By comparing and contrasting elementary school records of the School Leaver and Non-Leaver groups, it is possible to isolate those factors that increase the likelihood of a student leaving school prior to graduation. The findings of this study are neither novel nor startling - they mirror the results of countless other research efforts. The potential School Leaver can be identified in elementary school.

A potential School Leaver tends to be a boy, from a low socio-economic background, whose rate of absenteeism increases to the point of 20 or more days a year in Grade 6. In elementary school he is likely to perform at a low level in reading and mathematics, to subsequently be retained in grade one or more times, and to be described in negative terms by his teachers.

These are the characteristics that define the School Leaver "population at risk". Students who possess these characteristics are more likely to leave school than students who do not and these students can be readily defined within the Quincy Public School System. What is critical is that our involvement with this group go beyond the point of mere identification and that more individualized, relevant, work-related educational programs be made available to them.

Chapter V

Follow-Up of School Leavers

In December, 1970, follow-up contact was initiated with the School Leaver sample. As each School Leaver had been out of school for a minimum of six months, it was possible to make a general assessment of community, employment and possible return-to-school adjustment. Contact was made with 145 School Leavers or 75% of the sample. The remainder of the sample had either left the area, or failed to respond to the mailed questionnaire.

Table 18 presents the follow-up data on the School Leavers. The largest grouping are those who have returned to school and are continuing in an educational program.

Table 18

FOLLOW-UP DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOOL LEAVERS

Category	School Leavers N	%
Return to School	42	29.0
Full Time Work	37	25.2
Part Time Work	10	7.0
Military Service	14	9.7
Unemployed	35	24.2
Married Females	7	4.9
Totals	145	100.0

The figures pertaining to those continuing in educational programs was actually larger earlier in the school year, but 11 of the School Leavers who returned to school had left again prior to the follow-up survey. It is impressive, however, that almost 30% are continuing in an ongoing educational program. Thirty-three of the 42 have returned to the Quincy School System and the remaining 9 are distributed among various public and private schools in the surrounding area. It should also be noted that in several instances individualized programs were arranged to enable the students to complete diploma requirements. Thus, in one instance, a student attends school only two hours a day and will receive his diploma in June.

Perhaps the most distressing aspect of the follow-up survey is the fact that 35 or 24.4% of the School Leavers are unemployed. The majority of this group have had sporadic periods of dead end kinds of employment and for the most part continue to be dependent on their families. There is little likelihood that they will improve their vocational potential without further education or training. Ten or 7% of the School Leavers have part time employment which is of an erratic nature. If these two groups are combined, the total number of School Leavers who are encountering employment difficulties is increased to 45 or 31%.

Many of the School Leavers who are employed are in jobs which afford little opportunity for upward mobility. It would be interesting to continue to follow these two groups to learn what their future course of action would be.

In view of the fact that almost 50% of our sample was 16 years and under at the point of their leaving school, and that one third of the sample was female, the 14 or 10% of the overall sample entering the service is high. It is more than likely that this group will receive adequate educational exposure during their service tenure. The current policy of the military is that a high school diploma or its equivalent is not required for enlisting or being drafted but it is a requirement for subsequent re-enlistment. There is thus built into the military experience the opportunity for those with less than a high school diploma to obtain the same, and vigorous encouragement is provided by the service itself.

RETROSPECTIVE FEELINGS ABOUT HAVING LEFT SCHOOL

In the follow-up survey School Leavers were encouraged to discuss their retrospective feelings about having left school. Fifty-four or 37.7% clearly indicated that they would not have made the same decision again. Twenty-eight or 19.6% said they were not sure. Forty-eight or 33.50% emphatically stated they would have made the same decision and in the remaining 13 or 10% of the cases the information was not ascertainable. Thus, the majority (57.3%) of School Leavers either regret the decision or already have questioned the wisdom of their choice. It was clearly the impression of the interviewers that if programs had been available to offer these young people at the time of the follow-up survey, a significant number may well have responded positively and entered an educational program.

Chapter VI

Recommendations: The Long View

During the 1969-1970 academic year, 191 students left school prior to graduation for reasons other than transfer to another school system or death. This represents an overall loss of 3.8% of the student population in grades 9 through 12. This school leaver statistic is impressively small when compared to national averages which exceed 30%.

While the number of School Leavers cannot be regarded as a major problem in the Quincy Public Schools, this statistical and clinical study has pointed up certain problem areas within the school system that warrant attention. Accordingly, the following three recommendations are presented.

EXPANDED VOCATIONAL EDUCATION OPTIONS

The differential School Leaver rates at Quincy High, North Quincy High and the Vocational-Technical School have already been cited. The Vocational-Technical School which tends to attract students from lower socio-economic backgrounds has the highest percentage of School Leavers. This reinforces the deep concern of Presidential Advisor Erlichman as expressed in a recent memo to Health, Education and Welfare Secretary Elliot Richardson (1) regarding the future course of Vocational Education. This concern grows out of the fear of many vocational-technical educators that there is a dangerous trend toward establishing a dual school system in the United States - academic schools for the middle and upper classes and vocational schools for the poor.

This tends to be true in Quincy for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds tend to aspire toward vocational education and to enroll in the Vocational-Technical School in disproportionate numbers. These same students also tend to leave school in disproportionate numbers and thus perpetuate the well known "poverty cycle." Indeed, 56% of the School Leaver sample live in 3 of the city's twelve census tract areas - areas which have been defined as economically deprived.

The tragedy is that while vocational education has greater appeal for the student from the lower socio-economic family, vocational programs are often quite inflexible due to Department of Education mandates which require vocational students to maintain a balance between academic and vocational education. To date, students at the Vocational-Technical School have also not been able to participate in cooperative work-study programs when it is in fact these students from marginal economic families who need them most.

Cooperative Work Study programs should be established as soon as possible within the Vocational-Technical School for both boys and girls. The vocational options available for girls is in particular need of expansion.

If it is not possible to establish Cooperative Work Study Programs at the Vocational-Technical School, it is strongly recommended that the current Work Study program operating out of Quincy High and North Quincy High Schools, be expanded immediately. Fully 40% of the School Leavers indicated that they would have remained in school if a Work Study program had been available to them. Expansion of this program would significantly increase the holding power of the system.

The entire scope of vocational education and its place in the Quincy School System requires reassessment and expansion.

INCREASED INSTRUCTIONAL FLEXIBILITY

A critical area of concern is that of the format of high school education as it exists not only in Quincy but in most of the nation as well. The reality is that with few exceptions most of the high school courses cover the span of an entire year which makes it difficult, if not impossible, for students to change courses or re-enter beyond the first month or two of school. When a student leaves school, re-entry by and large is not possible until the following September.

A more flexible organizational plan such as the semester, trimester, or quadrimester, referred to as the "45 and 15 plan," would allow school re-entry at several points during the year. In a trimester or quadrimester plan, for example, a student could re-enter at the beginning of a new educational cycle every three or four months.

When the instructional program at the high school level becomes individualized, this will provide even greater flexibility for the re-entry of a School Leaver. For indeed a student could re-enter at any point and resume his individualized instructional program.

The two primary recommendations for increasing the holding power of the Quincy Public Schools involve the instructional program and include expanding vocational options and creating greater flexibility within the high school curriculum. A secondary recommendation involves an expanded guidance role that would include preventive programming and counseling.

GUIDANCE INVOLVEMENT WITH SCHOOL LEAVERS

This critical analysis of School Leavers in the Quincy Public Schools presents compelling evidence that School Leavers can be identified in elementary school. Having identified them, the salient question is "what then?" It is at this point that administrative and pupil personnel services staffs must work together in the assessment of the skills, abilities, and learning styles of each student. An individualized instructional program can then be developed that will maximize the possibility of academic success for each student. Such an approach should serve to reduce the numbers of School Leavers whose early academic careers are fraught with failure and frustration. This is clearly the direction in which the Quincy Public School System is moving and this may well account for our statistically low rate of School Leavers.

This same approach must continue into the secondary schools where potential School Leavers become increasingly more visible. In addition, there is a need for a "formalized re-entry route" worked out by the administrative and guidance staffs so that students wishing to re-enter will not get "lost" or "reshuffled" from person to person. It is recommended that one member of the guidance staff in each high school assume this role - as a student or school leaver advocate - and in concert with the administrative and pupil personnel services teams develop re-entry guidelines.

ALTERNATE EDUCATIONAL ROUTES

It is unrealistic to assume that all students will complete their high school education in the traditional way. Within the city there are three educational and vocational programs in operation which provide alternate routes to continuing one's education.

Adult Basic Education

The Adult Basic Education program, a federally funded program in operation two evenings a week, offers counseling and instruction in math and language arts. While many persons have participated in this program, it has limited appeal to the School Leaver. An academic night school has little appeal to the adolescent whose motivation is low. After a few years in the labor market and first hand knowledge that his potential for upward mobility is extremely poor, such programs become more meaningful and relevant.

There is little likelihood, however, that the recent School Leaver will take advantage of evening school programs. Only one School Leaver became involved in this program during the 1969-1970 school year.

Pre-Vocational Program

The Pre-Vocational Program, funded through the Division of Employment, is open to individuals over 16 who are unemployed or underemployed. The Division of Employment Security selects the participants who are enrolled in a six month training program and receive a stipend under the Manpower Training Development Act. The training program is geared to equip the enrollee with marketable skills that will enable him to move into an occupational career.

None of the School Leavers was involved in this program during the 1969-1970 school year.

High School Equivalency Program

The final option open to the School Leaver is the High School Equivalency program. Within this program, an individual's academic deficiencies are identified and an evening school program arranged. When the individual passes a test administered through the Department of Education he is awarded a Certificate of High School Equivalency.

In order to take advantage of this program, however, the student must be 20 years old or 19 and out of school for a full year. Hence, this is not a realistic option for the recent School Leaver.

While there are indeed continuing educational options for the School Leavers, participation hinges on the level of motivation that can be initiated and sustained. Once a School Leaver or any person is engaged in one of these programs, they are treated in a mature manner and given maximal encouragement by a highly skilled staff trained to deal effectively with this somewhat alienated group.

The primary task, however, is a motivational one, a challenge more easily met if a greater number of options were available within the ongoing high school day programs.

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Appendix A

SCHOOL-LEAVERS SURVEY

STUDENT INTERVIEW

Interviewer_____ Date Left_____

Date_____

1. _____
   Name- Last First-M.I. Age-Yrs.-Mos. School Grade Birthdate

2. _____
   Address Telephone How Long Resided There

3. _____
   Father's Name Age Occupation Highest Grade Attained

4. _____
   Mother's Name Age Occupation Highest Grade Attained

5. Siblings Rank Order -- Oldest to Youngest

	Name	Age	Education	Marital Status
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				

6. Have you ever been retained? What Grades?
   Yes or No

7. School interest, sports, clubs, particular subjects etc.(If any are indicated, qualify extent of participation or interest by - very much, moderate or somewhat).

8. Interests out of school - sports, cars, work, girls, etc. (If any are indicated, qualify extent of participation or interest by - very much, moderate or somewhat).

9. Have you ever had any serious illnesses?

   A. Interviewer should make note here relative to any significant physical characteristics (i.e. overweight, underweight, acne, handicaps)

B. Brief description - grooming, clothing, personality.

10. How do your parents feel about your leaving?

11. When did you first think about leaving school? (Try to be specific - for example, did it enter his mind the first time he was not promoted?)

12. Have you ever had contact with guidance counselors?

A. Elementary - _____ _____ - If yes, school and counselor.
Yes No

B. Who was your guidance counselor in junior high? How often did you see him or her?

C. Who was your guidance counselor in high school? How often did you see him or her?

13. When you finally decided to leave school, who did you talk to? (open end)

A. Did you talk with parents?

B. Teachers - if so, whom?

C. Guidance counselor - if so, was it helpful?

14. Future plans -

A. Are you working now?

B. What are your future plans?

Appendix B

SCHOOL-LEAVERS SURVEY

PARENT INTERVIEW

Interviewer_____ Date_____

Interview should be preceded by explanation that the Quincy School System is making every effort to further understand the reasons for students leaving so that program modifications may be explored to prevent this kind of occurrence, etc. etc. - also that re-entry is always open to the student.

1. How do you feel about_____ leaving school? (When interviewing one parent, try to obtain attitudes of parent not present if different from one being interviewed.)

2. When did he/she first mention to you that he wished to leave?

   A. Had you suspected that he/she might leave, and if so, when did you first feel this way?

   B. If yes above, what did you do about it?

   C. Did you contact the school?

3. Have you had any contact with guidance over the years?

   A. Elementary_____. If yes, school and counselor.
   Yes or No

   B. If yes, what was nature of contact and what happened?

   C. Any contact with guidance at junior high level? If yes, state its nature.

D. Any contact with guidance at high school level? If yes, state its nature.

4. What about your own educational experience? Did you and your husband graduate from high school? If not, highest grade achieved by both.

5. Husband's occupation and age.

   Wife's occupation and age.

6. Conclude with impressions of home conditions, and personal observations of interviewee.

Appendix C

NAME_____ ADDRESS_____ TEL.#_____

Last school attended_____ Interviewer's Name_____

SCHOOL LEAVER ONE YEAR FOLLOW-UP

This is Mr. or Mrs._____. I am with the Pupil Personnel Services of the Quincy Public Schools and we are doing a survey of all those who left Quincy school system last year. We wonder if you would be willing to answer a few simple questions?

1. Are you attending school anywhere at this time? Check one:

a. Full time_____
b. Part time_____
c. None_____
d. Service_____
Branch_____
Reserves_____ _____
Yes No

If "part time" or "full time" are checked above, describe briefly:

_____

_____

2. Are you working? Check one:

a. Full time_____ b. Part time_____ c. Unemployed_____
If unemployed, skip to #7.

3. If working full time, how long have you worked there and where is it located?

_____

4. Have you received any on-the-job training? Yes_____ No_____

5. Have you received any promotions? Yes_____ No_____

6. Do you belong to a union? Yes_____ No_____

7. If unemployed, how long have you been unemployed? Have you worked since leaving school? Describe briefly and state how long you have worked.

_____

8. If you had it to do over again, would you have left school?

_____

9. As you think about it now, what do you feel was the reason for your not having completed school?

_____

_____

10. Are you married? Yes_____ No_____

Children? Yes_____ No_____

END